Summarised inspection findings

Newbattle High School

Midlothian Council

6 February 2024

Key contextual information

School Name: Newbattle High School
Council: Midlothian Council
SEED number: 5546036
Roll: 1177 young people

Newbattle High School is a non-denominational secondary school serving the communities of Mayfield, Easthouses, Newtongrange, Gorebridge, North Middleton, Temple and surrounding areas. The new school building opened in June 2018. The headteacher has been in post for five years. He is supported by a senior leadership team of five depute headteachers, including one part-time.

Attendance is generally below the national average. Attendance dropped significantly during and since the COVID-19 pandemic. Exclusions are generally in line with the national average. There has been a significant reduction in the number of exclusions in recent times. In September 2022, 22.6% of young people were registered for free school meals. In September 2022, 59% of young people lived in Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) deciles one to three. In September 2022, the school reported that 43% of young people had additional support needs.

Newbattle High School is a European Digital Skills award establishment. They mentor other schools from across Europe who seek recognition for their digital creativity.

2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment	good

This indicator focuses on ensuring high-quality learning experiences for all children and young people. It highlights the importance of highly-skilled staff who work with children, young people and others to ensure learning is motivating and meaningful. Effective use of assessment by staff and learners ensures children and young people maximise their successes and achievements. The themes are:

■ learning and engagement
■ quality of teaching
■ effective use of assessment
■ planning, tracking and monitoring

■ Most teachers use the school's values well to underpin their work. In most lessons, relationships between young people and staff are positive. Staff are caring and respectful towards young people. Young people respond well to praise offered by staff and through praise postcards linked to the values. Staff and young people achieved a silver Rights Respecting Schools Award and are working towards gold as they develop their rights-based approach.

■ Most young people engage well with the tasks set by teachers. In a minority of lessons, young people have well-considered opportunities to work independently and to lead aspects of their learning. This enhances young people's engagement and motivation for learning. Young people would benefit from more regular use of these opportunities across departments.

■ Teachers have worked collaboratively to produce a Positive Learning Policy that clearly confirms expectations and routines in classrooms. Almost all young people are polite and reflect these expectations. When required, staff respond quietly, appropriately and calmly to address the few young people who are not focused during learning and who can cause low level disruption at times. Staff should build on their positive relationships with young people by applying high standards and expectations to all young people consistently. Middle leaders and staff should continue to work with all young people to ensure these expectations and routines support positive learning environments.

■ The principal teacher of pedagogy, working collaboratively with teachers in the Learning and Teaching Group, has agreed what high-quality classroom practice should look like. This is shared in a well organised toolkit accessible to all staff and underpinned by the learning and teaching policy. It is supporting improvements in the quality and consistency of learners' experiences across the school.

■ Most teachers design well-structured lessons, using starter activities to focus young people on their learning. Most teachers share the purpose of learning, and in a majority of lessons these are linked well to success criteria. However, success criteria too often focuses on the completion of tasks rather than how young people can show progress in learning. In a minority of lessons, teachers regularly refer to the purpose of learning and what successful learning looks like. They also review progress using plenaries effectively at the end of a lesson. This highly effective practice needs to be developed and embedded further.

■ In most lessons, teachers use questions to check young people's understanding. In a minority of lessons teachers use challenging questions to ensure young people think deeply about their learning. Most young people in the senior phase experience challenge through appropriately

paced lessons. For a majority of young people in the broad general education (BGE), the pace of learning is often too slow and tasks set are not sufficiently challenging. Middle leaders should support staff to develop an agreed approach to improve young people's higher-order thinking skills. This should include reviewing learning which is overly teacher led and where the experience of young people is too passive.

- There are examples of the highly effective use of digital technology by staff to enhance learner experiences. This is a strength of the school. All young people have their own digital device to continue to learn at home successfully. Young people with additional support needs (ASN) use a digital literacy support tool very well to support their learning. A majority of teachers use digital platforms creatively to engage young people meaningfully. This includes designing interactive tasks and valuable online assessment activities.

- Most teachers check young people's progress in learning effectively through ongoing dialogue with learners. Teachers use an appropriate range of approaches to assess young people, including an increasing range of formative assessment techniques. In most subjects, teachers use peer and self-assessment purposefully. In a few lessons, young people need further support to offer meaningful feedback on their work and the work of others.

- Most young people recognise that the feedback they receive is helping them to improve and progress in their learning. In almost all lessons, young people in the senior phase receive helpful feedback through planned learner conversations with teachers. Most teachers also use digital platforms well to provide feedback to young people. This helps young people to be clear on their next steps to accelerate progress. Young people in the BGE are beginning to record and reflect on their learning through their online Learner Journey template. Teachers should now ensure all young people's targets and next steps are consistently ambitious, realistic and well-understood by the learner.

- Most teachers are confident in their assessment judgments. In the BGE, this is largely based on increasingly effective use of National Benchmarks. Additionally, most teachers engage in regular and appropriate moderation activities that supports the reliability of assessment outcomes. There has been positive moderation work conducted with local primary schools. Senior leaders identify the need for further moderation activities with other secondary schools.

- In the senior phase teachers show a clear understanding of standards associated with National Qualification (NQ) courses. A number of staff adopt Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA) roles or have subject development roles at local, regional and national levels. These staff work collaboratively with the wider school to increase confidence in applying national standards.

- Staff in departments regularly track and monitor the progress of young people. Middle leaders and staff work systematically to analyse attainment data and use it to inform relevant interventions when young people are under achieving. Teachers should build on this practice by using this data to inform planning of learning which is more consistently well-matched to the needs of all young people.

2.1 Safeguarding and child protection

■ The school submitted self-evaluation information related to child protection and safeguarding. Inspectors discussed this information with relevant staff and, where appropriate, children. In addition, inspectors examined a sample of safeguarding documentation. Areas for development have been agreed with the school and the education authority.

3.2 Raising attainment and achievement	**satisfactory**

This indicator focuses on the school's success in achieving the best possible outcomes for all learners. Success is measured in attainment across all areas of the curriculum and through the school's ability to demonstrate learners' achievements in relation to skills and attributes. Continuous improvement or sustained high standards over time is a key feature of this indicator. The themes are:

- attainment in literacy and numeracy
- attainment over time
- overall quality of learners' achievement
- equity for all learners

- The headteacher, senior and middle leaders have implemented a range of targeted strategies and universal approaches to raise attainment. Many of these interventions are leading to improving patterns in attainment, such as in the attainment of young people in the BGE or those living in poverty, and aspects of literacy and numeracy measures. Whilst there are improvements on prior levels of attainment, overall young people's attainment is below that of their peers. There is a significant need to improve the breadth and quality of passes in NQs, including in English and mathematics, particularly by young people in S4 and S5.

Attainment in literacy and numeracy
Broad General Education (BGE)
- By the end of S3, young people's attainment in CfE third and fourth level in literacy and numeracy has been improving from 2017/18 till 2021/22. In 2022, most young people achieved CfE third level or better in literacy, which is an improvement from a majority in previous years. A minority of young people achieved CfE fourth level in literacy. In 2022, almost all young people achieved CfE third level or better in numeracy. Just over half of young people attained at CfE fourth level, which is an improvement from a minority in previous years. Senior leaders and staff must continue to improve these measures further.

- Staff use effective approaches to improve young people's literacy. A principal teacher of transition works effectively with primary schools to plan moderation activities and to identify and support children needing literacy support. This helps more children achieve appropriate milestones at the point of transition. Teachers of English engage in helpful moderation activities to ensure the reliability of professional judgements. Staff leading on literacy offer professional learning to support all staff to embed literacy successfully as a responsibility of all.

- Senior leaders are supporting the mathematics department well to develop the leadership and planning to achieve improvements in numeracy. This support is improving the tracking of learners' progressive skills development and moderation of standards in numeracy. This is beginning to improve the robustness of teachers' professional judgements as a result.

Senior Phase
Literacy and numeracy (leavers)
- Almost all young people leaving school in 2021/22 achieved a Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) level 4 or better in literacy. This is an improvement from 2017/18. Attainment at this level is in line with the virtual comparator (VC) for 2021/22 having been significantly lower in the previous year. In 2021/22, a majority of leavers achieved SCQF level 5 or better, and a minority achieved SCQF level 6, in literacy. Attainment at

these levels has been significantly lower or much lower than the VC for most of the period from 2017/18 to 2021/22.

■ From 2017/18 to 2021/22, almost all or most leavers achieved SCQF level 4 or better in numeracy. A majority left with SCQF level 5 or better. This is generally in line with the VC over the five-year period. From 2018/19 to 2021/22, a few leavers achieved SCQF level 6. This was in line with the VC in 2021/22 after being significantly lower in selected years.

■ All or almost all leavers with ASN achieved SCQF level 3 or better, and most achieved SCQF level 4 or better in literacy and numeracy from 2019/20 to 2021/22.

Literacy (cohorts)
■ At S4 most young people attained SCQF level 4 or better in the last four years. This is in line with the VC. A majority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in the last five years. This improved from significantly lower than the VC in selected years to being in line in 2022/23. By S5, based on the S5 roll, almost all young people attained SCQF level 4 or better in the last five years. This was in line with the VC in 2021/22 and 2022/23. At SCQF level 5 and level 6, performance has not been strong over the five-year period. Performance was significantly lower or much lower than the VC for selected years. By S6, based on the S6 roll, almost all young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in three out of the past five years, including 2022/23. This improved from significantly much lower or significantly lower than the VC in selected years to in line in 2022/23. Most young people attained SCQF level 6 in 2022/23, which is in line with the VC, and an improvement from a majority in the previous four years.

Numeracy (cohorts)
■ At S4, most young people attained SCQF level 4 or better in the past five years. This is generally in line with the VC. A minority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in the last two years, which is significantly lower than the VC. By S5, based on the S5 roll, almost all young people attained SCQF level 4 or better in the past five years. This is in line with the VC. A majority of young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in the last five years. This was significantly below the VC in 2022/23. A few young people attained SCQF level 6 in four out of the past five years. This was significantly much lower than the VC in 2022/23. By S6, based on the S6 roll, almost all young people attained SCQF level 5 or better in 2020/21 and 2022/23. This is in line with the VC. A minority attained SCQF level 6 in the last five years. This is in line with the VC after being significantly lower or significantly much lower for selected years.

Attainment over time
BGE
■ Senior leaders use effective systems to track and monitor young people's attainment. A group of middle leaders use data very effectively to identify young people off track and ensure interventions are put in place. Senior leaders should develop a raising attainment strategy. This should detail everyone's role in raising attainment and stress how teachers should use data better to inform how they support young people to raise their attainment.

■ Senior leaders demonstrate positive progress over time of young people in the BGE. In 2022, by the end of S3, most learners achieved CfE third level in most curricular areas. A minority of learners achieved CfE fourth level in a majority of areas. Improvements in the BGE have the potential to enhance attainment as learners progress into the senior phase.

Senior Phase

- The attainment of young people in the senior phase has been impacted by various factors. Senior leaders identify decreasing school attendance and a drop in stay-on rates linked to the pandemic and recovery. Staff have focused on supporting the increasing wellbeing needs of young people and families, including anxiety and mental health issues. Senior leaders recognise improving young people's attendance is key to raising attainment. Whilst strategies used to improve attendance so far demonstrate a positive impact for individuals, they are not yet leading to improvements in the overall attendance profile. Senior leaders should continue to ensure the pattern of falling attendance is addressed with a whole school, strategic approach.

- The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers, using average complementary tariff scores is generally in line with the VC. The attainment of the lowest attaining 20% of leavers with ASN has improved over the last five years and now sits above the VC in 2021/22. The performance of the middle 60% shows no consistent pattern of improvement and for four of the last five years has been significantly lower than the VC. The performance of the highest 20% has improved and moved from being significantly lower to being in line with the VC.

- In S4, and by S5, based on the S5 roll, the performance of the lowest and highest 20% is generally in line with the VC over the last five years. For the middle 60%, performance is generally significantly lower than the VC over the past 5 years. By S6, based on the S6 roll, performance of all groups is improving and has moved from being significantly lower in selected years to being in line with the VC in 2022/23.

Breadth and Depth

- Staff are increasing the range of SCQF courses offered to learners. This year, senior leaders increased the number of NQ courses studied by learners in S4 from six to seven, offering greater opportunities for success. Senior leaders recognise that there is a significant need to improve the attainment, and quality of passes, of young people in S4 and S5.

- Staff's relentless focus on raising attainment for all supports most young people at S4 to attain five or more courses at SCQF level 3 or better over the five-year period. This is generally in line with the VC. Most young people attain two or more to three or more courses at SCQF level 4 or better over the five-year period, which is generally in line with the VC. The school's performance at four or more to five or more courses in SCQF level 4 or better has been significantly lower than the VC in three of the last five years. Attainment at SCQF level 5C or better is significantly lower or much lower than the VC over the last five years.

- By S5, most young people achieved four or more awards at SCQF level 4 or better and most young people achieved one or more awards at SCQF level 5C or better in the last two years. This is generally in line with the VC. There has been an improvement in young people attaining SCQF level 5C or better and SCQF level 6C or better over the last five years. However, performance is generally significantly lower or much lower than the VC.

- By S6, for those young people who stay on at school there are some improvements in their attainment. The school's performance at one or more to five or more awards at SCQF level 5A or better has improving patterns and is generally in line with the VC. A majority of young people achieved one or more qualifications, and a minority achieved three or more qualifications, at SCQF level 6A or better from 2020/21 to 2022/23. This is in line with the VC. There are improving patterns in the attainment of one or more and two or more awards at SCQF level 7C over the past five years. In 2022/23, around half of young people attained one or more awards at SCQF level 7C which is significantly higher than the VC.

Overall quality of learners' achievement

- The quality of learners' achievements is a strength of the school. A majority of young people benefit from an extensive range of clubs and activities, including sport, literacy and expressive arts. These allow young people to develop their confidence and team working skills. Staff track young people's participation in activities. This ensures staff identify and address those not benefitting from involvement. Senior leaders plan to renew a skills framework to help young people communicate better how they are developing important skills.

- Staff recognise and celebrate all young people's achievement and success in a range of ways. They award praise postcards, house points and promote success through display boards and an active social media presence. Award ceremonies celebrate the attainment and achievement of young people, with a focus on being inclusive of the achievements of all.

- Senior leaders and staff ensure young people benefit from the development of skills through a developing range of vocational courses and awards. For example, the very high-quality range of challenging and progressive learner pathways available through Sports and Wellbeing. Over 100 young people develop important leadership skills through the 'Aim Higher' leadership academy. Young people gain skills in communication and leadership through well-planned pupil groups such as the children's rights and mental health groups. This is supporting young people to feel empowered to make a positive difference to their school.

- Learners benefit from staff's very strong partnership working. Partners help in various ways, including supporting young people to achieve, develop skills and to support learning pathways.

Equity for all learners

- The headteacher, supported by all staff, is committed to ensuring equity for all learners. Staff have very effective tracking systems in place to monitor young people with barriers to their learning. As a result, senior leaders are clearly able to demonstrate improvements in the attainment of young people. Staff are closing attainment gaps for young people who receive free school meals, with an ASN, or who live in SIMD one to three.

- There is a clear plan in place for Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). Senior leaders consult all parents on the use of PEF. Positively, staff have also asked parents if they have seen the impact of PEF on their children's experiences and outcomes. This is supporting planning of future spending. PEF has been mainly spent on staffing, such as nurture, mental health and outreach workers. These staff work very well together to target interventions for young people. They, with other staff, have raised attainment through approaches to nurture, transitions and a focus on ensuring learners achieve at least five awards at SCQF level 3 or better. Most learners accessing interventions achieved their targeted level in the BGE or gained five or more awards at SCQF level 3 or better in the senior phase.

- Senior leaders need to continue with positive steps taken to raise attainment. While there have been improvements for school leavers living within SIMD one to three, attainment is still significantly lower when compared to young people living in similar deciles across Scotland.

- Staff use robust approaches to monitor young people's attendance. They are aware that attendance is below national averages and are taking positive steps to address this. A few targeted young people have improved their attendance through involvement in out-of-school supports, digital learning and partnerships supporting them to reengage in learning.

- Staff work effectively with a range of partners such as Skills Development Scotland, local employers, colleges and universities to support young people when they leave school. As a

result, almost all young people move on to a positive destination. The majority move to further or higher education with a significant minority going to employment. Employment opportunities include both full and part-time employment with a minority successfully engaging in modern apprenticeships. Young people also benefit from the Lothians Equal Access Program for Schools (LEAPS) which supports access to university.

Quality of provision of Special Unit

The Complex Needs Base (CNB) in Newbattle High School recently opened. There is one class, with a few young people from S1 and S2. The roll is likely to increase during the next academic session. There is one teacher and two learning assistants. A depute headteacher has leadership responsibility for the base. The Midlothian Education Resource Group considers which education resource is most suitable for young people who cannot sustain mainstream education. The CNB works with young people who have significant additional support requirements.

QI 2.3 Learning, teaching and assessment

■ Staff have developed a friendly and welcoming atmosphere within the CNB. They are respectful and inclusive which results in positive relationships between them and young people. All young people actively participate in appropriately challenging tasks. Staff plan learning that appeals to young people's interests and takes account of their areas of strength and enjoyment. Teachers support young people to make use of appropriate digital technology which assists learning. Depending upon their abilities, young people complete tasks on their individual laptop and send their work to teachers for feedback. They say they prefer this way of working, and it supports them to improve their literacy skills. This helps to build valuable digital skills for the future. Appropriately, teachers recognise the need to encourage writing and they should continue to support and provide tasks to help improve young people's handwriting.

■ Teaching is underpinned by a commitment to inclusive values. Teachers and staff demonstrate consistently caring and positive interactions with young people. They tailor learning to young people's individual needs. This is helping young people to spend more time in class than they were able to sustain at previous placements. Teachers work skilfully with young people to find the correct balance between support and challenge.

■ Teachers assess young people's needs effectively and use this information to plan learning appropriately. Teachers collate information from young people's previous placements to inform the work they set. Senior leaders and the local authority should work together to plan effective transitions for young people who will attend the base. As the provision is very new, plans are in place to establish improved joint working with previous school placements. Senior leaders and teachers should also continue with their well-considered plans to work with similar provisions within and beyond the local authority. This will enhance staff professional learning, and opportunities for moderation will support robust assessments of CfE levels. Teachers should continue to draw upon the National Benchmarks to assess the knowledge, understanding, and skills for learning, life and work which young people are developing across the curriculum.

■ Teachers and staff plan activities to ensure young people progress through a broad range of learning experiences and outcomes. The development of processes for planning and assessment are in the early stages and are not yet fully established. Current planning reflects the wellbeing indicators and is personalised for each young person. Learners and their families are beginning to contribute to planning learning, including some input into the shape of the school day and the topics they will cover. Senior leaders should begin to find further ways to involve young people and their families in the development of plans for the base.

■ Staff plan for young people to begin joining peers in mainstream classes when they have settled in the school. Senior leaders should ensure that this is given priority when appropriate. Where applicable, mainstream teachers should be familiar with young people's education plans and should contribute to planning and the assessment of young people's progress.

QI 3.2 Raising attainment and achievement

- Learners in the base are making appropriate progress from their prior levels of attainment in literacy and numeracy. Young people enjoy tuition in very small groups and have access to experienced staff who understand their needs. All young people are working towards early or first level in both literacy and numeracy. A few young people work on aspects of second level on literacy and numeracy.

- In literacy, young people are making appropriate progress for their developmental stage. Young people write a daily diary and begin this task by verbally recounting the entry. Young people use drawings as a stimulus and recount events using art to help them tell the story. Most young people write independently, punctuating sentences accurately. For example, using capital letters, full stops and question marks. Young people take turns to speak and contribute to conversations at the appropriate time when engaging with others.

- In numeracy, young people estimate the value of a pile of coins and can discuss the value of money in relation to items they might purchase. They accurately count and confirm the value. Young people work towards individual targets in numeracy and staff respond to their requirements appropriately.

- Senior leaders and teachers should now begin to gather data over time about young people's progress within the BGE. They should analyse this data and include information about young people's progress in achieving literacy and numeracy targets within support plans. This would provide further helpful information to support individual progress.

- Young people celebrate their own and each other's achievements within the base regularly throughout the school day. There is a culture of praise and kindness, and young people enjoy discussing their success at school. Senior leaders and staff are devising ways for young people to be more fully involved in the life of the school. This includes joining other classes for selected activities like baking and during social times for gaming. These activities are increasing inclusion generally for all young people at the school. Young people at the base are building confidence and valuable social skills. The school should expand on this positive start, ensuring that there are plenty of opportunities for all young people to be fully included in the life of the school.

Other relevant evidence

■ Staff have a clear understanding of the socio-economic circumstances of young people and their families. Detailed information on socio-economic disadvantage in the local area and the main drivers of poverty support staff to understand the school's context. Staff have taken positive steps to ensure that there is no cost associated with the school day. Additionally, staff actively consider how to support families by reducing costs for achievement opportunities.

■ The school submitted information relating to compliance with the revised Nutritional Regulations 2020 and key duties as required by The Schools (Health Promotion and Nutrition) (Scotland) Act 2007. The Health and Nutrition Inspector (HNI) discussed this information with relevant staff and young people. In addition, the HNI examined documentation relating to the effectiveness of whole-school approaches to improving the health and wellbeing of young people through food in school. A few areas for improvement have been agreed with the school and the school meals provider. Aspects of good practice were identified in relation to food in schools.

Practice worth sharing more widely

- The very high-quality approaches in the Sport and Wellbeing department that provide challenging and progressive pathways for all young people.

Explanation of terms of quantity

The following standard Education Scotland terms of quantity are used in this report:

All	100%
Almost all	91%-99%
Most	75%-90%
Majority	50%-74%
Minority/less than half	15%-49%
A few	less than 15%

Other quantitative terms used in this report are to be understood as in common English usage.